

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

DRAFT

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Palm Springs Tramway Valley Station

Other names/site number: _____

Name of related multiple property listing:

The Architecture of Albert Frey

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. Location

Street & number: 1 Tram Way

City or town: Palm Springs State: CA County: Riverside

Not For Publication: ☐ Vicinity: ☐

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this ___ nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

___national ___statewide ___local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

___A ___B ___C ___D

Signature of certifying official/Title:

Date

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official:

Date

Title :

State or Federal agency/bureau
or Tribal Government

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4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- ☐ entered in the National Register
☐ determined eligible for the National Register
☐ determined not eligible for the National Register
☐ removed from the National Register
☐ other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private: ☐
Public – Local ☐
Public – State ☒
Public – Federal ☐

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s) ☒
District ☐
Site ☐
Structure ☐
Object ☐

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Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

RECREATION AND CULTURE

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

RECREATION AND CULTURE

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

MODERN MOVEMENT

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: METAL: steel, aluminum, STUCCO, GLASS

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

The Palm Springs Tramway Valley Station is located at the rocky, arid base of Mt. San Jacinto. It was originally designed in 1949 and not completed until 1963. The desert modern commercial building is a structural truss design of steel frame construction capped by a shed roof. It is elongated to straddle a dry streambed. Large windows placed within the truss openings provide astounding views up the mountain slope. The building is in excellent condition and retains a high level of historic integrity.

Narrative Description

Conceived in the late 1940s and not begun until 1961, the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway was designed as a joint venture of Frey and Chambers with Williams & Williams. John Porter Clark served as coordinating architect. The Aerial Tramway became one of the Coachella Valley's most popular tourist attractions taking passengers from the arid lower station at 2,600 feet to the upper station at 8,500 feet, a mountainous area of pine trees and winter snow. Williams & Williams was responsible for the Tramway Mountain Station that is evocative of an alpine chalet. The Williams team consisted of Roger and E. Stewart with the latter serving as lead

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designer. The Tramway Valley Station was designed by Albert Frey in collaboration with Robson Chambers using a New England style covered bridge as its inspiration.

A dry streambed that could become a raging river at certain times of the year was the challenging location chosen for the Valley Station. Hence, Frey's decision to straddle the streambed with a building utilizing a structural truss design (**Figure 2**). A shed roof with its upward slope paralleling the slope of the mountain covers the building (**Figure 3**). By inserting glass between the trusses of this lightweight structure, spectacular views looking up the mountain at the tram are afforded waiting riders (**Figures 4 and 5**). Corrugated metal sheathes most exterior surfaces. On the interior, natural wood paneling embellishes triangular surfaces on northeast and southwest elevations, and wood beams supporting the shed roof extend through the glazing to the deep overhangs. The ceiling is of perforated and corrugated aluminum, a typical design element associated with Frey.

The descriptions found in available building permits of work performed on the Tramway Valley Station were often unclear due to a lack of specificity. As a result, the dates of the following additions and alterations reflect the best interpretation of these documents. At the rear, mountain-facing portion of the property, a concrete patio and water feature that extend away from the original building were added in 2001. At the southeast end of the building, slightly recessed from and lower than the original blank face of the rear of the tram bay, is a two-story office space addition that was completed in 2003. The smooth versus corrugated metal skin of the addition's cladding, and the design and arrangement of the large rectangular windows sufficiently differentiates this modification from the original design such that integrity is not compromised. The interior ticketing lobby and waiting area were remodeled and reconfigured in 2003. The triangular pattern of metal-framed windows on northeast and southwest elevations, natural wood paneling, perforated corrugated metal ceiling, and projecting wood beams are original to the design. The café was remodeled in 2007. A tall, rectangular exterior elevator was constructed in 2013 near the main entrance and staircase near the north end of the primary elevation. Connecting the elevator structure to the upper entrance is a narrow metal bridge. The elevator structure is located at a sufficient distance from the original building to not diminish the building's physical integrity.

Despite the noted alterations, integrity of design, materials, and workmanship of the Palm Springs Tramway Valley Station remains high. It is able to convey its architectural significance because the property retains the essential physical features associated with the work of Albert Frey. These features include corrugated metal cladding, shed roof, use of concrete block, extensive glazing between structural steel framework, perforated corrugated metal ceiling, exposed projecting beam ends, and absence of applied ornamentation. Its only historical reference is that of a New England covered bridge that, in this case, Frey redesigned using modern materials and construction techniques. In addition, the property remains at its original location in its dramatic mountain setting and, as relates to association and feeling, continues to operate as a tramway station.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- ☐ A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- ☐ A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- ☐ B. Removed from its original location
- ☐ C. A birthplace or grave
- ☐ D. A cemetery
- ☐ E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- ☐ F. A commemorative property
- ☐ G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1963

Significant Dates

1963

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Frey, Albert
Chambers, Robson

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

Palm Springs Tramway Valley Station is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C at the local level of significance in the area of Architecture. The property embodies the distinctive characteristics of commercial architecture associated with the modern movement as interpreted by Albert Frey in collaboration with Robson Chambers for the desert environment of the Coachella Valley. In addition, the property meets *The Architecture of Albert Frey* Multiple Property Submission registration requirements for commercial buildings in association with the historic context “Desert Modern Design in the Coachella Valley, 1934-1965.” The period of significance corresponds with the building’s date of construction, 1963.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Although a joint venture of Williams & Williams (Tramway Mountain Station), John Porter Clark (coordinating architect), and Robson Chambers (Frey’s business partner at the time), the design of the Palm Springs Tramway Valley Station is attributed primarily to Albert Frey by scholar Joseph Rosa as noted in the Multiple Property Documentation Form. The building was inspired by New England covered bridges because of the necessity to straddle a streambed at the project site. Frey’s interpretation of this design resulted in a totally modern building utilizing a structural truss system of steel frame construction capped by a shed roof. In addition, the large windows, corrugated metal cladding, perforated corrugated metal ceiling, and lack of applied ornamentation exemplify the distinctive characteristics of many commercial and institutional buildings associated with architect Albert Frey.

The importance of the Palm Springs Tramway Valley Station and its significance within the “Desert modern design in the Coachella Valley 1934-1965” historic context are presented in the Multiple Property Documentation Form. The station is a key example of the commercial building property type that maintains sufficient integrity to be readily identifiable as the work of master architect Albert Frey. The property meets National Register Criterion C because it embodies the distinctive characteristics of commercial architecture associated with Albert Frey and is the work of a master architect.

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9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

As indicated in *The Architecture of Albert Frey* Multiple Property Documentation Form.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- ☐ State Historic Preservation Office
 - ☐ Other State agency
 - ☐ Federal agency
 - ☐ Local government
 - ☒ University of California, Santa Barbara
 - ☒ Other
- Name of repository: Palm Springs Art Museum

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Approximately 22 acres

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- | | |
|------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 33.839909 | Longitude: -116.610121 |
| 2. Latitude: 33.835649 | Longitude: -116.610571 |
| 3. Latitude: 33.835471 | Longitude: -116.616189 |
| 4. Latitude: 33.839606 | Longitude: -116.616815 |

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Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The nominated property is located at 1 Tram Way, Palm Springs, Riverside County, California at the terminus of Tram Way. Its legal description is 22.00 ACRES M/L IN POR W 1/2 OF SEC 7 T4 APN: 009-619-208.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The nominated property includes the entire parcel historically associated with 1 Tram Way.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Peter Moruzzi/Architectural Historian
organization: _____
street & number: 2018 Griffith Park Blvd., #114
city or town: Los Angeles state: CA zip code: 90039
e-mail petermoruzzi@gmail.com
telephone: 213-706-0151
date: December 30, 2014

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

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Photo Log

Name of Property	Palm Springs Tramway Valley Station
City or Vicinity	Palm Springs
County	Riverside
State	California
Photographer	Peter Moruzzi
Date Photographed	December 2014

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- | | |
|--------|--|
| 1 of 8 | CA_Riverside County_Frey MPS_Palm Springs Tramway Valley Station_0001.tif
Northeast elevation, camera facing south |
| 2 of 8 | CA_Riverside County_Frey MPS_Palm Springs Tramway Valley Station_0002.tif
Northeast elevation, camera facing west |
| 3 of 8 | CA_Riverside County_Frey MPS_Palm Springs Tramway Valley Station_0003.tif
Northeast elevation, camera facing southwest |
| 4 of 8 | CA_Riverside County_Frey MPS_Palm Springs Tramway Valley Station_0004.tif
Northeast elevation, primary entrance, exterior staircase, exterior elevator, camera facing southwest |
| 5 of 8 | CA_Riverside County_Frey MPS_Palm Springs Tramway Valley Station_0005.tif
Southwest elevation, camera facing east |
| 6 of 8 | CA_Riverside County_Frey MPS_Palm Springs Tramway Valley Station_0006.tif
Southwest elevation, outdoor terrace, camera facing east |
| 7 of 8 | CA_Riverside County_Frey MPS_Palm Springs Tramway Valley Station_0007.tif
Interior view, camera facing southeast |
| 8 of 8 | CA_Riverside County_Frey MPS_Palm Springs Tramway Valley Station_0008.tif
Interior view, camera facing south |

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Figure 1: Palm Springs sketch map by Albert Frey. Property indicated with arrow.

Figure 2: Northeast elevation, looking southwest, 1964.

Figure 3: Southwest elevation, looking north, 1964.

Figure 4: Interior view, looking southwest, 1964.

Figure 5: Interior view, looking southwest, 1964.

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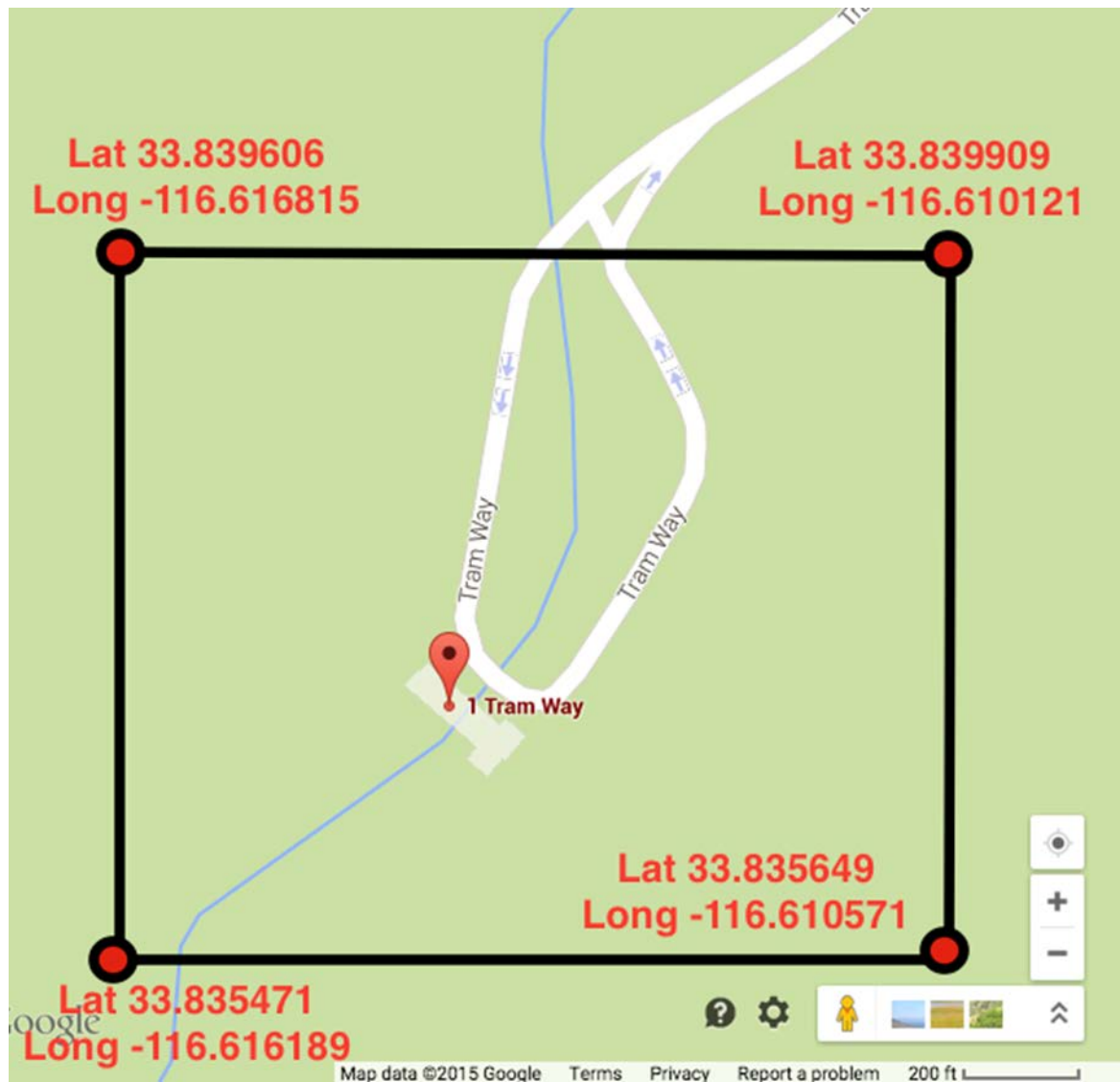
Location Map

Latitude: 33.839909 Longitude: -116.610121

Latitude: 33.835649 Longitude: -116.610571

Latitude: 33.835471 Longitude: -116.616189

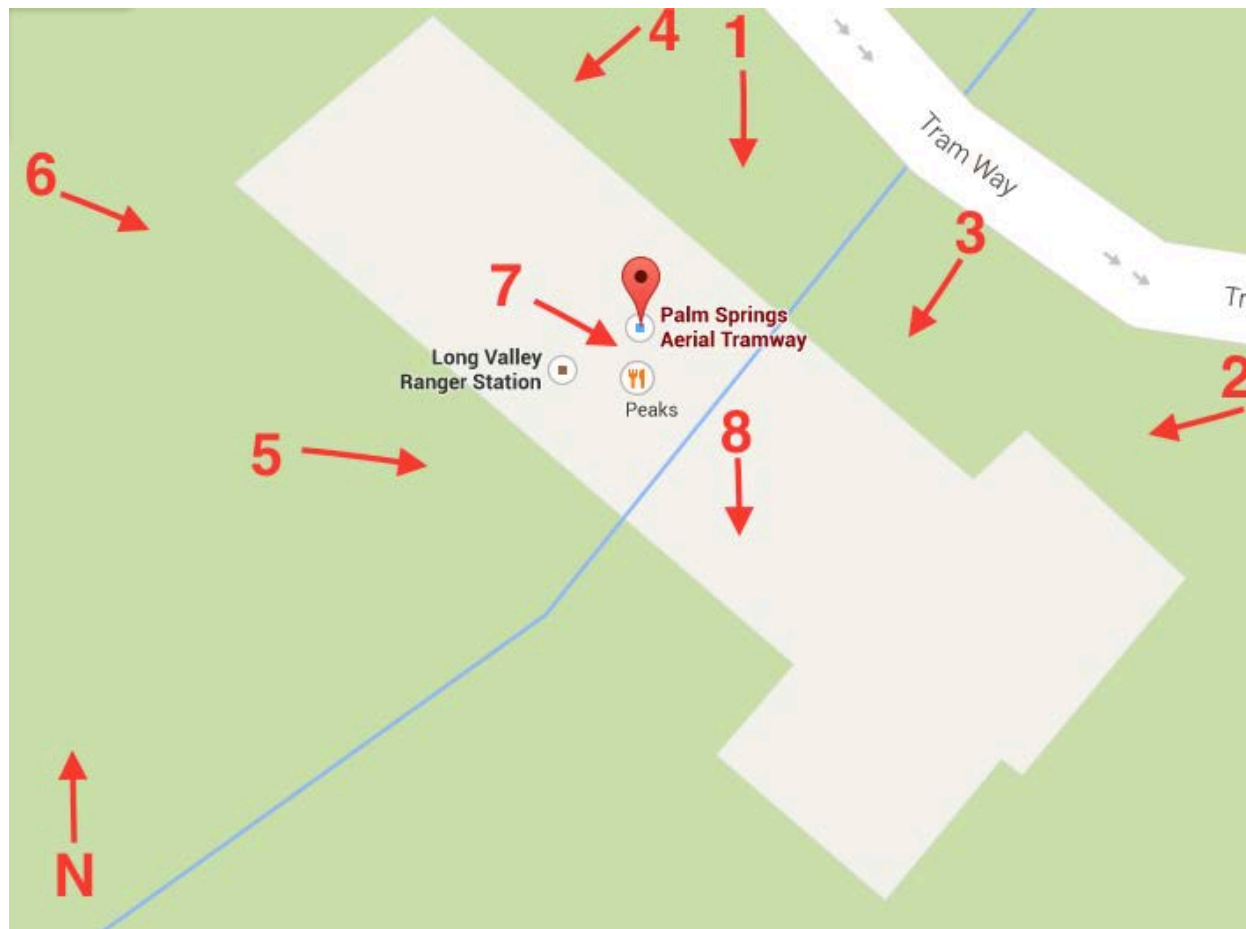
Latitude: 33.839606 Longitude: -116.616815



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Sketch Map/Photo Key



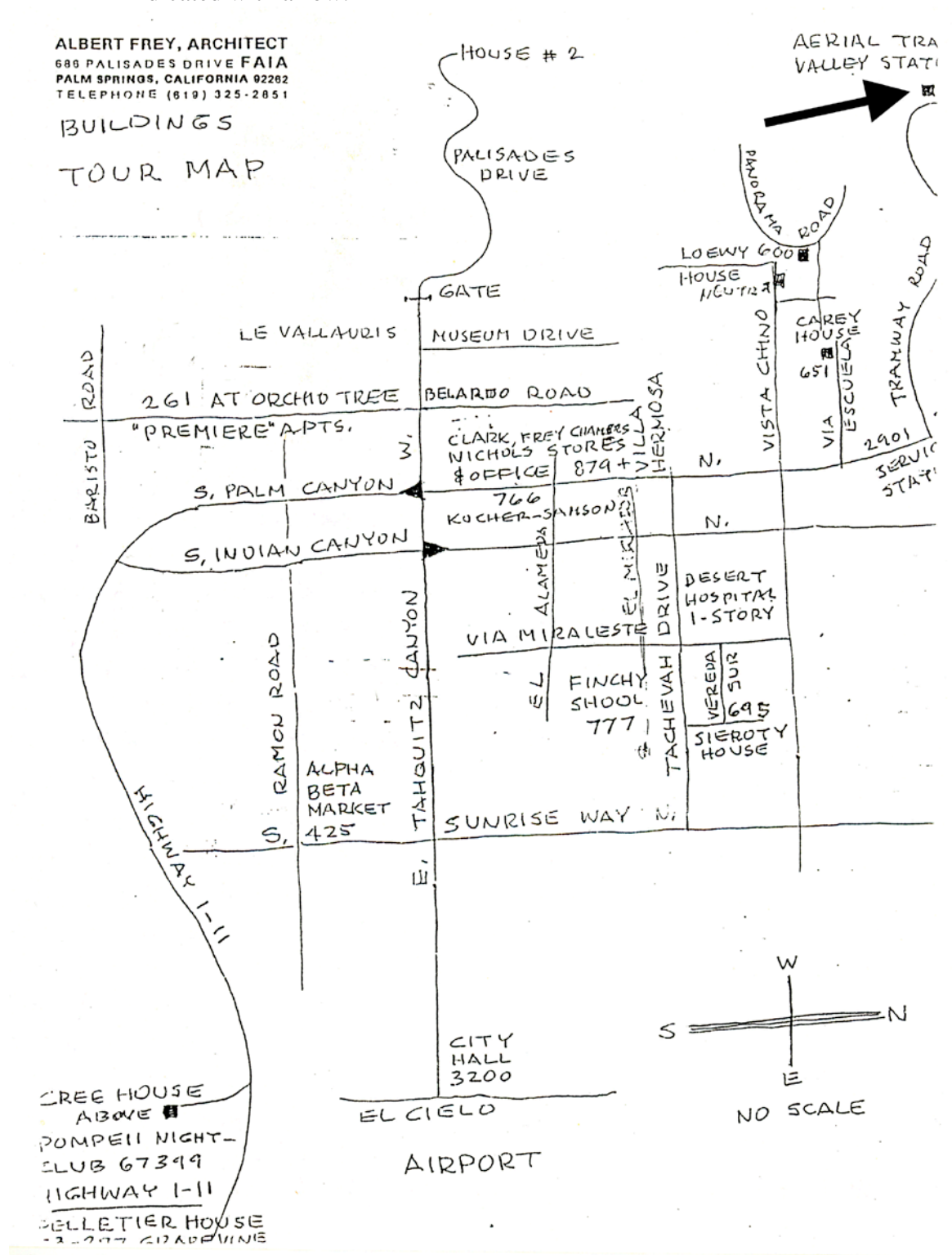
Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

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Figure 1. Palm Springs sketch map by Albert Frey. Palm Springs Tramway Valley Station is indicated with arrow.



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Figure 2. Northeast elevation, looking southwest, 1964.



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Figure 3. Southwest elevation, looking north, 1964.



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Figure 4. Interior view, looking southwest, 1964.



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Figure 5. Interior view, looking southwest, 1964.



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